

One Christmas Eve

by RALPH HAMILTON

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THE shades of the pretty home were pulled down and the gloom of dusk was alleviated by one light only in the room where the mourning denizens, Harold Bruce and his wife, Laura, sat. They were awaiting the arrival of a taxicab ordered in time to catch an evening train for the South. Both were somber-faced and weary of mien. They had not spoken for some time, for it was a situation where words meant nothing. The wife never lifted her tear-stained eyes, the husband wore a set expression upon his face as though exerting the utmost will power to repress the poignant emotion which consumed him.

Without, joyous shouts echoed, the sound of merry sleigh bells tintured the air with Christmas eve fervor, and the contrast of this long-anticipated holiday presentation with what they had hoped and planned for, wrenched their souls to the point of anguish. Their lives desolated beyond repair, poignant memories ever present, they scarce dared to rest their glance upon the portraits of two smiling, happy faces looking down from a heavily framed picture, for only that morning they had received the terrible news that the originals, their only children, Don, aged six, and Etta, two years his junior, had been victims, with many others, of a disaster by cyclone and flood that had devastated the district where they had their winter home in Florida.

All they knew was that the pretty bungalow and many others, with their occupants, had been swept away, and hundreds were said to have perished, and no word had been received as to the fate of their two little ones, not of Rhoda Marsh, who had them in charge.

Rhoda Marsh had come into their thoughts almost as frequently as little Etta and her brother. Each recalled that it was a Christmas eve four years



Both Were Somber-Faced and Worned of Mien.

back when Harold Bruce had come home from the funeral of his mother, bringing with him a wistful-eyed, sad-faced mite of a girl.

"Laura," he said to his wife, "this is Rhoda Marsh, a poor orphan child whom my mother adopted, who has given her the tenderest care to the last hour of her life and was a blessing to her old age. She is left without a home. Should we give her one?"

"We should, and we shall," came the quick reply, as Mrs. Bruce gazed into the earnest, longing eyes of the girl of fourteen, and read there truth and innocence and a soulful appeal to all that was maternal and sympathizing in her nature.

It proved to be a wise and fortuitous choice. As the children came along Rhoda proved to them a true and loving sister, nurse and friend.

Then came a test of the fidelity and self-sacrifice of the girl just merging into young womanhood. Both of the children were taken down with a dangerous contagious malady. The house was quarantined. Rhoda braved the perils of infection. Day and night she was the constant attendant of Don and Etta. She found so sure a loving place in the hearts of those she had benefited, that her eyes beamed with joy and happiness whenever she was in their presence.

The physician who attended the children was Albion Merritt. He had entered the profession the protégé of a wealthy man, and had acquired a clientele of prominence and a large income. It was when the little ones were convalescent that he had come to Mr. Bruce, who was a close personal friend.

"Bruce," he said, "I cannot find words to express my admiration and respect, yes, and something deeper, for that sweet little heroine, Rhoda, whose studious care of the children, far more than my ministrations, is responsible for their recovery."

"Yes," answered Mr. Bruce with genuine fervor in his tones, "she is a

jewel of worth and constancy. Both my wife and myself realize what we owe to this poor wail who has endeared herself to us as though she were our own daughter."

Doctor Merritt proved his expressed sentiments by very often visiting the Bruce home after that. The children loved him and he would drop in for an hour or two and play with them and talk with Rhoda and listen to her singing at the piano, for music with Rhoda was her one great passion. There never was a visit on his part that Rhoda did not greet him with a beautiful, tender flush upon her fair, expressive face, and one night her kindly benefactors indulged in playful badinage when she accompanied Doctor Merritt to the door.

"Doctor Merritt has become quite a beau—eh, Rhoda?" intimated Mr. Bruce.

"Three times in a week," spoke Mrs. Bruce. "Rhoda dear, he is a loyal chevalier."

"Please don't," pleaded Rhoda, looking serious, shy and embarrassed. "He is only a great good friend to all of us, and he has so encouraged my singing that it has made me more anxious than ever to please him."

Early in November Mrs. Bruce, the children and Rhoda went to the Florida winter home where the family spent four months of the year. There were anticipated happy days in the pretty bungalow when Mr. Bruce should join them later on. It was just two weeks before Christmas when Mrs. Bruce decided to take a trip North and remain with her husband until the holidays, when he would be ready to accompany her to Fair Villa. It was a few days after her coming that her husband said to her: "Laura, Doctor Merritt has fairly haunted the house evenings since you went away. I met him today and told him of our plans, and he was especially pressing in his inquiries about Rhoda. I presume he will be here this evening to ask you about Rhoda," but the young physician did not materialize as expected, and the next day the Bruces understood that he had left the city.

It was two days before Christmas when the dreadful news came of the disaster in the South. Fair Villa had been practically swept off the map; their winter home had been carried away by the raging waters. Telegrams contained vague and distracting details. They had no reason to hope that their loved ones had escaped the general fate of those who were missing among the former residents of the little inland town. They were now ready to go South and seek a trace of their two little children and of Rhoda, in whom they had so trustfully left them in charge.

"It must be the taxi," spoke Mr. Bruce, arising with a sigh from his painful reverie as the doorman rang, but he crossed the outer threshold to come face to face with Doctor Merritt. The manner and words of the latter were jarring to the bruised sensibilities of the bereaved father, for the young physician was radiant of face. His eyes suggested a fervent exhilaration as he greeted Mr. Bruce with riotous embrace and waved his hand gayly to Mrs. Bruce, who had followed her husband into the hallway.

"A glad and merry Christmas to both of you!" hailed Doctor Merritt joyously. "You haven't heard?" spoke Mr. Bruce in a low, reproachful tone. "Why, what do you mean?" questioned Doctor Merritt. "The disaster at Fair Villa—the children."

"Why, bless you!" fairly shouted the doctor—"they are right here!" Harold Bruce wavered against the wall for support. Mrs. Bruce uttered a wild scream. Across the threshold from the porch there rushed little Etta and her brother. Joy, delight, ecstasy mitigated the shock of what at first stunned the frantic parents as an appearance from the dead.

"And last, but not least, she whose mission in life seems ever to be to bring healing and happiness, and love and peace to all those who are dear to her!" in a gently reverent tone continued Doctor Merritt, and with supreme satisfaction the young physician viewed the five reunited ones in a maze of embraces, kisses and tears. Rhoda, clinging to Mrs. Bruce, hid her face in modest confusion, as Doctor Merritt recited her brave battle against the elements in a great storm upon a battered raft until she had brought the children to safety.

"But you, Doctor Merritt?" propounded Mrs. Bruce wonderingly—"how came you to be at Fair Villa?"

"I arrived there after the disaster," was the reply. "I had gone there on a specific mission, later executed, to ask our peerless Rhoda, queen of all women."

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He Covered It With Kisses.

unkind, to become my wife," and as Rhoda extended her hand he covered it with kisses and pressed it to his happy, happy heart.

"If there was a mistletoe here I would march you two promptly under it!" threatened Mrs. Bruce, immersed in thrilling joy and gratitude.

"There shall be one before Christmas morning arrives!" cried Doctor Merritt in tones that rang out like a cheer. "Come, Bruce, you and I on a hunt for Santa Claus and the choicest gifts he can bestow. Oh! nowhere in the world, and never to any others, has there come a happier, merrier Christmas than the one we shall celebrate!"



Sleigh bells peal with merry jingle, church bells set the air a-jingle, while with these the door bells mingle in a syncopated score. There's the sound of happy greeting as acquaintances are meeting; there's the knell of Christmas fleeing as the clocks strike o'er and o'er; Johnnie's trumpet's shrieking shrilly, Philip's drum and fife's not still; he makes attempt to drown but silly sounds of guns that outside roar. There's the squeak of Mollie's dolly, and the laughter jolly from this happy little four. But above all Christmas noises made by little girls and boys is one that better than all toys is more good cheer it holds in store. 'Tis the sound of mother pitchin' things about out in the kitchen as she calls (she knows we're 'tchin') "Come to dinner!" through the door.

"Who Said There Ain't No Santa?"



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RICHARDSON

On November 27, 1919, Charlie Preston died at Riverview hospital at Louisa, Ky., at the age of 37 years, leaving a wife and two small boys. His body was brought to his old home and after the funeral service was laid to rest in the family graveyard—and I may well say "followed by a multitude of sorrowing friends."

I truly say we miss him everywhere. His aged father and mother miss their son, his wife misses her kind husband, the children their loving father, we our neighbor. He is missed at every religious service. Even the children of the neighborhood said, "There would not be any more good meetings." He was an active member of the United Baptist Church, and was always present at every service unless providentially hindered, and when he was called on to do anything for the salvation of souls or the cause of Christ, he answered readily.

Though we miss him, sadly miss him in so many ways, we realize that he is not dead, but sleeping. And that his life speaks though his lips are dumb. Though we miss his voice singing in church, he is singing the songs of the redeemed around the throne of God in that land where all is immortal youth and eternal bloom; where it is one bright summer always and storms do never come; and that he being done with the turmoil of earth is given a peace and joy that fadeeth not away.

This mortal life is a brief thing when compared to eternal life—just a passing thought, like a shadow on the threshold that glides swiftly away, or a leaf on the stream being borne rapidly on toward the great ocean of eternity. And death to the Christian, what is that? Just a summons to come up higher; just closing the eyes in sleep—only a dream, a long sweet rest.

Though the loss of this good man, this dear friend, means much to those who knew him best and loved him most, they surely would not, if they could, call him back to this world of care and trouble. He having been faithful unto death is now given access of life. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord; they rest from their labors and their works do follow them." Though his presence will never cheer us again on earth, he has left us an example to follow. To live faithful to God and give to the world the best we have, and meet him where no far-aways are said.

To his wife and children we would say, that God, the husband to the widow and father to the fatherless will never forget or forsake those who trust in Him, nor will He give them one trial too much. The sun is surely shining behind the dark cloud. Death is the common lot of all mankind regardless of condition or position. We can not be so rich or great that we can escape death or the certain touch of grief. We can not bar our door against the grim reaper—so strong but what he will force an entrance.

And there is no union here on earth that does not end on earth, and if we love we surely mourn. Sorrow makes the whole world kin. Death enters the palace of the rich and into their hearts comes the selfsame grief that comes into the hearts of the poor in their humble cots, and from the eyes of each the scalding tears must flow. Yet God, in His infinite love and mercy has promised us strength as our days demand and that He is with us always even unto the end of the world. So if we take Him at His word and are faithful a few more days our loved ones will greet us on the other shore. Though they must turn and take up life's duties again, though the world will not look so bright or so full of promise as it used to because a light has gone out in their home, God will give them grace to kiss the rod that smites them and strength to bear the cross laid upon them.

So let us watch and wait and trust the Lord in all things, great and small, nor question His wisdom, till our summons comes and look forward always to a glorious reunion over there. "Thou Father doest all things well. Although our hearts with sorrow swell, There's comfort in Thy grace alone. Help us to say 'Thy will be done.'"

GEORGES CREEK

The stocking social given by Mrs. Vic Burgess for the benefit of her widowed neighbor, Mrs. Preston, was well attended. Although the night was bitter cold quite a number of young folks from Richardson walked two miles. The music was good. Aunt Burgess played the violin, and Hubert Preston the guitar. They played games also, but "no kissing" mind you.

And when the time came to say good night, they each gave a penny for each year of his age. If you are curious about some one's age just give a "stocking social" invite them and count the pennies.

BRIDGE LETTING

The Fiscal Court of Lawrence county will, on December 29th, 1919, at the hour of 1 o'clock p. m., at the Court House in Louisa, Ky., receive sealed bids for the erection of a steel bridge 150 ft. long across Catt creek, near its mouth.

Said bridge to be a "leg bridge including a concrete foundation."

Work to begin immediately upon acceptance of contract. Right to reject any and all bids is reserved.

HILLIE RIFFE
County Judge of Lawrence Co.
This Nov. 26, 1919. dec 26

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Whitesburg, Ky.—David Caudill, 50, was run down by a coal train while walking across a bridge at Roxana, several miles below here. A son of the unfortunate man walking with his father, saw the train just in time to leap from the bridge into the North Fork of the Kentucky River and thus save his life. The dead man leaves a wife and several children, most of whom are grown.

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PINE DOORS, 5 CROSS PANELS 1 1/2 IN. THICK

QUANTITY	SIZE	PRICE EACH
2	2-6 x 6-10	\$ 5.38
12	2-8 x 7-10	5.77
7	2-6 x 7-0	5.54
8	2-6 x 7-6	5.75
7	2-8 x 6-8	5.38
5	2-10 x 7-0	6.03
1	2-8 x 6-10	5.50
4	2-10 x 6-10	5.95
4	2-8 x 7-0	5.77

SAME AS ABOVE EXCEPT 1 1/2 INCHES THICK

1	2-8 x 7-2	4.18
20	2-8 x 7-6	4.50
3	2-10 x 6-10	4.40
8	2-6 x 6-8	3.80
14	2-8 x 7-4	4.50
9	2-6 x 6-10	4.00
8	2-8 x 6-10	4.18
7	2-6 x 7-6	4.10
15	2-2 x 6-8	3.30
2	2-6 x 7-0	4.10
5	2-2 x 7-0	4.00
6	2-2 x 6-10	3.65
3	2-6 x 7-10	4.10
3	2-2 x 7-2	4.40
2	2-10 x 6-8	4.50
1	2-8 x 7-0	4.50
1	2-10 x 7-2	4.18
6	2-10 x 6-0	4.37
3	2-10 x 6-10	4.08
23	2-4 x 7-0	4.59
3	2-4 x 6-10	3.78
2	2-2 x 6-10	3.78
19	2-10 x 7-0	4.64
1	3-0 x 7-0	6.21
1	2-6 x 7-0	4.05
1	2-6 x 6-8	3.76
6	2-10 x 6-8	5.59
3	2-6 x 6-10	3.80
1	2-8 x 6-8	3.90
2	2-8 x 6-10	4.00
1	2-10 x 6-10 1 1/2 inches thick	3.50

OAK, 1 1/2 INCHES THICK

1	2-6 x 6-10	7.28
1	2-6 x 7-0	7.82
2	2-8 x 6-8	7.59
2	2-2 x 6-8	7.01
10	2-2 x 7-0	7.50
8	2-0 x 7-0	6.87
5	2-0 x 7-6	7.00
10	2-2 x 6-6	6.87
8	2-4 x 6-8	7.00
5	2-10 x 6-10	8.36
5	2-8 x 7-6	8.13
1	2-6 x 6-8	7.28
1	2-4 x 7-0	7.51
1	2-8 x 7-0	8.13
1	2-4 x 6-8 2 panel, Birch	7.00

SNYDER HARDWARE COMPANY LOUISA, KENTUCKY

Saw Mill For Sale

Complete saw mill, 20 horse power, good condition, ready for use. Located at Jattie, Lawrence county, Ky. Price \$800. This is a very low price. The boiler and engine alone are worth more than this.

MORTON HAMMOND

JATTIE : KENTUCKY